

10 years after Gene Robinson, African Anglicans to take stock

by [Fredrick Nzwili](#)

August 28, 2013

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NAIROBI, Kenya (RNS) Concerned that the crisis in the worldwide Anglican Communion is deepening, conservative Anglican primates in Africa are organizing a second conference to discuss ways of returning the church to what they describe as biblical faithfulness.

The primates held the first conference in Jerusalem in 2008, five years after openly gay New Hampshire Bishop Gene Robinson was consecrated in the Episcopal Church. The action threw the communion into disarray.

At the Jerusalem meeting, the primates called for the creation of an Anglican province in North America to rival the Episcopal Church. Five years later, the primates say the new Anglican province, known as the Anglican Church in North America, is thriving.

Now, the archbishop of Nigeria and archbishops in East Africa have organized the second Global Anglican Future Conference at which they hope to accelerate the process that began in Jerusalem. The so-called GAFCON II meeting will take place Oct. 21-26 in Nairobi.

“We have succeeded in consolidation,” said Ugandan Anglican Archbishop Stanley Ntagali.

“Anglican churches have been planted in North America. The clergy trust one another to preach according to the Bible,” he said. “But the crisis in the communion continues to deepen as more (homosexual) consecrations occur.”

In addition to the consecration of gay bishops, the African primates are concerned with the growing acceptance of same-sex unions in the West. They say attempts to discipline the Episcopal Church were not successful, and, as a result, a “spiritual cancer” has spread to other provinces, including the Anglican Church of Canada, the Church of England, the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Church in Wales, and the Anglican Church of Southern Africa.

In their words, GAFCON II seeks to restore good order, theological integrity and biblical faithfulness.

“We need to see the overthrow by some churches of the creation order of female and male as just one symptom of the disease,” wrote Kenyan Anglican Archbishop Eliud Wabukala, chairman of the GAFCON primates’ council in a letter to the conference dated Thursday (Aug. 22). “The cause is spiritual.”

The primates remain optimistic that Archbishop Justin Welby, the new global leader of the Anglican Communion, may prevent a split since he is on record as being opposed to gay consecrations.

“The primates are happy with Welby since he has been attending our meetings,” said Ntagali. “He has taken time to follow what we are doing and he understands we are not breaking the communion.”